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ABSTRACT

The involvement of women and minorities in the accrediting process was studied nationally. The experiences of women and minorities who participated in the accrediting process were surveyed, including perceived or actual empowerment derived from participation. Views of accrediting agencies and member institutions were also assessed. Respondents identified problems associated with identifying, selecting, and utilizing women and minorities in the accrediting process, as well as institutional and accrediting agency level barriers. Participation in both institutional and specialized/professional accreditation was addressed. Institutions reported whether participation in accrediting was formally or informally considered as a positive factor in a variety of institutional policies. The institutions' policy in identifying participants for self-study committees and task groups, as well as the make-up of such groups, was determined. Agencies described actions taken in the last 3 years to expand participation of women and minorities. Response pattern and written comments provided an impression that the study of participation of minorities and women in the accrediting process was discomforting or threatening. There was consistent and strong agreement that participation in the accrediting process is perceived as empowering. (SW)

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# INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF MINORITIES AND WOMEN IN THE ACCREDITING PROCESS

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The Involvement and Empowerment of Minorities and Women in the Accrediting Process

In spite of federal and state Affirmative Action laws and regulations, women and minorities continue to be under-represented in administrative positions in America's colleges and universities. Recent studies sponsored by the American Council on Education find relatively little progress in the representation of women or minorities in mid-level and senior-level executive positions (Frances and Mensel, 1981) in contrast to an earlier assessment carried out by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (1973). The approximate 4% positive change is attributed to the increased number of women in the work force, greater mobility of women, and an increase in the number of women obtaining terminal degrees. Astin (1982) documented the underrepresentation of minorities, students and professional staff two decades after the civil rights movement began. Simmons (1984) has reported on problems of black representation in institutional accreditation. Various special programs and initiatives have been taken by an array of national higher education associations and philanthropic organizations aimed at spurring upward professional mobility of women and minorities. Yet, there appears to be a missing thread in the fabric of higher education's social and professional equality goals.

One of the missing links in achieving the desired upward mobility of women and minorities within the profession is the absence of an active, affirmative role that might be achieved

through the institutional and program accreditation process. Commitment to voluntary accreditation in lieu of a national ministry may inadvertently result in an oversight of the strategic role accreditation might play in correcting some of the historical inequities. Regional and specialized accreditation touches nearly every college and university on a regular basis (Kells, 1984).

Visiting evaluation committees made up of qualified peer professionals visit the campus of the institution under review, carry out interviews, interact with policy and decision-makers and enjoy an aura of prestige. Individuals serving on such teams typically are perceived on their own campus as well as the host campus as an authority or expert (Young, Chambers, Kells, 1983). The question is whether qualified women and minorities are appropriately represented on such teams. A concomitant question is whether accrediting agencies and their member institutions have policies, practices, and procedures which affirmatively promote women and minorities in the accreditation process, thereby enhancing upward mobility.

The evidence would suggest accreditation and professional affirmative action have never been consciously related. Compliance criteria for recognition of nationally recognized accrediting agencies and associations promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education speak only of the agency or association using "...competent and knowledgeable persons, qualified by experience and training, and select such persons in accordance with non-discriminatory practices..." (1981). A

review of the requirements of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation, the umbrella organization for institutional and professional associations, similarly pledges a guarantee rather than an affirmative statement. Several of the regional accrediting associations do urge members to identify qualified women and minorities when recommending prospective visiting team members. No effort is made, however, to determine whether such action takes place. Furthermore, it is not known what pool of prospective women and minorities does exist nor how the agencies have used that pool. A number of important research questions emerge:

1. What is the involvement level of women and minorities in the accrediting process? Is there any difference between institutional and specialized/professional accrediting agencies in such involvement?

2. What, if any, indvidual professional empowerment is associated with participation in the accrediting process?

3. What problems are inherent in the identification, selection, and appointment process which deter broadening participation of minorities and women in the accrediting process?

Conceptual Framework

Given the intent of policy research to influence decisions about a particular outcome, the temptation is to proceed without the encumberance of a conceptual framework. Yet, the complexities of studying the role of accreditation in relation to the upward professional mobility of women and minorities require a model to identify variables of importance within a recognizable perspective. Underrepresentation of women and minorities results, in part, from inaccessibility to power. Hersey &

Blanchard, (1983), discussed the concept of power both in organizational and individual perspectives. Theories which fit into this category operate on the assumption that when more people in an organization are "empowered," the effectiveness of the organization is enhanced (Kanter, 1979; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974).

For the purpose of this study, Kanter's (1977) theoretical framework identifying strategies to obtain power or to become "empowered" in the organizational structure was used. Kanter recognizes both the formal and informal sources of "empowering" derived from activities that are (a) extraordinary, (b) visible, and (c) relevant. Thus, women and minorities who are provided visibility of their professional achievements and potential through being identified, selected, and utilized in the accreditation process acquire degrees of professional influence. Participation on accreditation teams is viewed as prestigious and as evidence of knowledge, expertise, and "connections". Kanter contended "...Women and minorities are often found in jobs that are behind the scenes or without measurable, identifiable contributions" (Fant and Kanter, 1980 p.23).

The power gained through social connections in the informal organization represents a second major source of becoming "empowered" ( Allen and Porter, 1983; Brass, 1985; Strauss, 1973). This has been recognized through many contemporary women's initiatives through the use of sponsors or mentors who facilitate the movement of a protegee through the system. As a result, accreditation provides a significant potential for

empowering qualified women and minorities both within their own institution and within the profession, thereby enhancing the advancement potential for the individual.

Conduct of the Study

The basic methodology involved survey which was carried out through a three-phase time period. Initially, letters were written to each of the accrediting members of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) requesting published policies and procedures pertinent to their accreditation process as well as a list of the member institutions which had carried out self-study over the three-year period 1982-83 through 1984-85. The purpose of this phase was to secure policy documents which could be analyzed relevant to the study. In addition, a listing of member institutions that completed self-study between 1982-85 would provide the population of institutions to be surveyed. Furthermore, the individual responding for the Agency became the contact person to whom the researchers could address a subsequent survey request. Interestingly, this phase of the study not only resulted in timely response but also one hundred percent participation by all of the member agencies of COPA.

Phase II involved a mailing of a survey instrument to the COPA member accrediting agencies (both institutional as well as specialized/program) as well as a similar but appropriately modified survey instrument to a sample of the 1982-85 self-study population of colleges and universities in each of the six regions in the nation (see Appendix A). A transmittal letter, an abstract of the purpose of the study, and the survey instrument

were included in initial and subsequent follow-up mailings.

Phase III was dependent upon responses from the institutions surveyed since the questionnaire solicited names of women and minorities known to the institutional respondent as active consultants/evaluators in the accrediting process (whether institutional or specialized/program). No attempt was made to secure a list of such participants from the agencies since the researchers had been warned confidentiality policies would preclude cooperation at the agency level.

An analysis of the surveys was conducted with attention to the difference in type of accreditation (institutional versus specialized/professional) and on the basis of the six regions in the country. Agency returns provided information on participation levels of policy makers, agency staff, and consultants or evaluators, as well as problems in identifying, selecting, and using minorities and women in the accrediting process. The institution returns provided information on self-study participation as well as institutional policies and practices relevant to the study. The participant returns provided information evidences of empowerment derived from the accrediting process involvement as well as perceived barriers and enhancers to broadening participation from the perspectives of the agencies, the institutions, and interested professionals.

The national study was more inclusive than reflected in the substance of this report. The researchers were not only interested in the "What" and "Why" of the problem but also the perceived "How" at the national, agency, and institutional levels to realize the full potential of the accrediting process as a

vehicle for professional mobility of minorities and women. That portion of the project is not included in this report but will be part of a monograph to be published by one of the Centers for the study of higher education.

## RESPONSE

The respondent pattern and behavior is noteworthy. In Phase I, all of the member agencies of COPA responded promptly when asked to report the institutional self-study activities over the last three years. There was no need to carry out a follow-up procedure with a single organization.

When the survey instruments were sent to the same agencies, however, follow-up procedures were necessary; in fact, a third iteration telephone request was initiated in order to get as complete coverage of the accrediting agencies as possible. During the first four-week iteration, agencies produced a 20 percent response rate, institutions a 32 percent response rate. During the follow-up iteration carried out during the month of January, the agency response moved to 60 percent and the institution response to 47 percent. The telephone follow-up was limited to the agencies and it produced 7 returns for an overall percentage of 76 percent for the COPA membership. Fortunately, all of the regional institutional accrediting bodies finally responded; three of the five national institutional accrediting bodies (predominantly proprietary institutions) replied while 24 of the 33 specialized (program) accrediting bodies responded. At times, the survey respondents made strong,

somewhat defensive comments. Such reaction was demonstrated in an executive secretary's verbal threat during the telephone follow-up, "If you list this agency as uncooperative or as a non-respondent, I intend to file a formal protest with COPA!"

The pattern of written comments was a further indicator that respondents experienced discomfort. There were profuse comments recorded on the survey returns of the agencies. In stark contrast, however, there was nearly total absence of comments on the institution responses. In each case, however, the instruments had invited observations or reactions on the existing state of participation of women and minorities in accreditation as well as the reasons for that state. Other questions invited comment on causes if underrepresentation were existent as well as proposed solutions if, in fact, underrepresentation existed. As will be reported later, comments of the agencies were more defensive than constructive.

Response patterns of the survey instruments sent to the women and minorities identified as known participants by the institutions were equally interesting. First, 22 letters mailed to the individuals identified in the institutional return were returned by the post office with the notation: "Addressee Unknown" or "No longer at this address". It was obvious that many respondents listed individuals who were in other institutions and who were mere acquaintances.

A comparable unanticipated outcome occured in the institutional response pattern. A total of twenty institutions returned their survey instrument unused with accompanying letters of explanation or apology. Reasons such as press of time,

unavailability of data, or other perceived barriers to cooperation were given. The apology and justification reflected in the responses of this group are best illustrated by a letter from a major research institution with a reputation for social activism:

> Chancellor _____ has asked me to respond to your request of January 1986 in which you invited the University of _____, to participate in a study concerning involvement of minorities and women in the accreditation process. I am sorry to inform you that we will be unable to participate owing to a lack of the requisite data, and insufficient staff resources to perform the research that would be necessary to accumulate such data. I am sure you will understand.

Another letter was received from a distinguished women's college:

> I regret to inform you that President _____ of _____ College will be unable to participate in your study to examine participation of minorities and women in the accrediting process.
>
> President _____ receives several requests each month to provide data for various studies and, because of the extensive demands on her time, she can only participate in a very select few.
>
> With best wishes for the success of your study.

## RESULTS

### Empowerment

The theoretical conceptual framework for this study was based on the concept of empowerment derived from participation in the accrediting process. All three respondent groups were asked to agree or disagree with the statement that such participation is viewed as prestigious and may even enhance the professional upward mobility of the participant. Only one agency, a specialized/professional accreditation agency, disagreed. All

but nineteen institutional respondents agreed; and all but one of the participants reported experiencing some form of empowerment as a result of involvement in the accrediting process. In an effort to determine substantive empowerment evidence, institutions were asked to report whether participation in accrediting was formally or informally considered as a positive factor in a variety of institutional policies. Over 90 percent of the institutional respondents saw such participation as contributing to professional growth while 55 percent reported the institution would recognize such participation as part of promotion and tenure consideration. Over one-quarter of the institutional respondents indicated merit pay consideration would be positively influenced while one-third of the institutions have other professional recognition or benefits for participants in the accrediting process. Participant perceptions were also sought on various types and evidences of empowerment which will be reported in a later section.

The Accrediting Agencies

Responses from the accrediting agencies were analyzed according to the type of accreditation as well as a composite of all accrediting agencies. Except for questions which were dependent upon the unique type of accreditation involved, there was notable consistency and agreement in the perceptions of the respondents. As observed earlier, response pattern and written comments communicated an impression that the study of participation of minorities and women in the accrediting process

is discomforting, even threatening. Twenty of the 32 returns were completed by the Executive Director or Deputy Executive Director. Some items such as number of member institutions, membership composition of the governing body, even the pool of consultant/evaluators were reported with specific numbers. Less detailed information was found in responses to questions on ethnicity of evaluators/consultants and agency policies on identification and selection of minority or women participants.

Minorities and women are found on the policy body membership of the accrediting agencies. Only two of the thirty-two agencies reported an all Caucasian male governing board and they were specialized agencies dealing with a male-dominated profession. Conversely, in those fields historically dominated by women, not only were there male members on the governing bodies but also serving on the professional staff of the agency. While minorities and women are prominent among membership of the governing boards, the same is not true for their agency professional and technical staffs. The ethnic make-up of these staffs reported for the 32 agencies were: 1 male and 3 female black professionals; 2 male and 8 female black technical staff; and 1 male and 38 female clerical staff. Hispanics were represented by 3 males and 1 female among professionals, 1 male and 3 females among the technical staff, and 6 males and 13 females among the clerical staff. Two Asian American professionals were reported while the Caucasian professional staff of the accrediting agencies were made up of 68 males and 59 females.

Over one-third of the agency respondents did not complete or

did not list the minority composition for the item seeking the ethnic make-up of their evaluator/consultant pool. For the remaining agencies, 428 Caucasian males and females were identified in contrast to 23 Blacks, 18 Hispanics, 4 Asian Americans, and 1 other minority.

Two-thirds of the accrediting agencies had no formal or written policy on the participation of women and minorities except for nondiscrimination declarations. All the respondents, however, declared they actively seek to identify qualified women and minorities, then do select and use them regularly. There was unanimity in the declaration that efforts were made to include women and minorities on visitation teams...."Especially where student minority enrollment patterns make it important". A number of agency respondents reported internal discussion over the past three years on equity and possible proactive policies. One agency reported existence of a "Committee On Underrepresented Constituencies" established in 1984. It had already been successful in increasing the percentage of the affected groups in its accrediting process.

Agencies were asked to indicate the problems associated with identifying, selecting, and using qualified women and minorities in the accrediting process. A consistent problem reported was the small number of minorities "in upper level and administrative faculty ranks" from which to choose. A sizable number of agencies perceived another problem in the narrow range of discipline areas in which minority groups are found...the social sciences and ethnic studies areas rather than in the

physical and natural sciences. Similarly, in administrative areas, prospects were reported to be in affirmative action, equal education opportunity, financial aid level offices in contrast to upper eschelon academic and business offices. Several respondents observed most minority professionals are found in public universities, resulting in problems of identifying minority evaluators with private institution backgrounds to serve on visits to the private sector.

Problems reported concerning selection of nominees to serve were similar to the problems encountered in the identification process. The limited range of disciplinary areas, limited institution-wide experience, and limited number of minorities in private institutions were listed most often.

Commenting on the problems in using minorities and women on teams, several agency respondents made the observation that their minority evaluators, are often prone to reject an invitation to serve because of competing demands and time commitments. Several respondents reported experiences described in the statement of one: "The number of minority evaluators who withdraw prior to a visit after accepting is significantly higher than other groups." Another perspective, however, was found in the observation of several agency respondents. One wrote, "Our rejection rate of minority evaluators is easily 2-3 times that of other groups by the institution being evaluated."

The agencies were also asked to describe specific actions taken to expand participation of women and minorities in the accrediting process over the last three years. Most reported activities which essentially could be characterized as

promulgating non-discrimination policy statements. Several had sent special letters inviting member institutions to submit special lists of nominees from their minority and women cadre. One regional accrediting commission reported concerted efforts to identify, recruit, and train women and minorities through a series of special workshops as well as through promotional literature sent to its membership. As previously noted, another agency has a "Committee on Underrepresented Constituencies" which was credited with already increasing the percentage of affected groups in their accrediting process.

The Institution

The responses of the institutions were first separated according to the type of accreditation, institutional as opposed to specialized/professional. The institutional responses were then examined on the basis of the different regional institution accreditation bodies. The instrument was designed to gain a perspective of policies and practices relevant to (1) self-study, (2) institutional input to accrediting agency consultant/evaluator membership, (3) the minority profile of the institution and (4) the institution's policies and practices in supporting as well as recognizing participation of its faculty and administrators in the accrediting process.

The policy of institutions in identifying participants for self-study committees and task groups as well as the make-up of such groups was also addressed. Fifty-six percent of the institutions that responded indicated they appointed members to the self-study committees while 22 percent had a voluntary policy

and 22 percent determined membership through a combination of volunteers and appointees. Interestingly, 80 percent of the institutions that appointed self-study members did have ethnic representation comparable to the percent of minorities reported in the institutional profile of full-time faculty and administrators. The volunteer policy institutions were less representative of their full-time faculty and administrator minority profile. Only fifty-four percent of this group had comparable representation, suggesting minorities may not step forward and voluntarily involve themselves in the internal accrediting process. Where both volunteer and appointee procedures were followed, one hundred percent of the self-study participant population had minority representation comparable to the ratio among full-time faculty and administrators. Very few of the respondent institutions had self-study minority representation comparable to the reported percentage of minority student enrollment, however.

Answers to questions concerning institutional involvement in the process of accrediting agency participant identification were noticeably less often completed or were vague and general rather than specific or detailed as found in other sections of the institution's return. There seemed to be ambivalence in the pattern and content of written comments. When asked to estimate the number of faculty and administrators who actively serve on evaluation teams or committees of the accrediting agencies, the majority of respondents recorded the number 0. When asked persons, by title, in the institution responsible for recommending potential evaluators/consultants, over half did not

respond, implying they did not know. The others reported the president as the one responsible for nominating five times as often as any other person. Other administrators, faculty, and self-study chairs were only occasionally reported as a source for identificaton and nomination. It was apparent the identification and selection policies of the accrediting agencies were not well known within the member institutions in this study.

In an effort to determine whether institutional policies and practices facilitate and encourage participation in the accrediting process, we asked what leave policy covered faculty and staff who do work for accrediting agencies. Fifteen institutions reported participation would be classified as professional leave but without pay. Two institutions reported participants would have to claim the time under personal days and three indicated participation would be classified as vacation days. All of the other respondents reported such participation would come under professional leave policy and with pay.

As previously observed, there were relatively few written comments on the institutional returns. Several that were, however, deserve to be reported. A number of the respondents indicated that their union contract precludes consideration of participation in the accrediting process for such things as promotion and tenure, merit pay, or professional recognition. Two of the respondents commented they felt accrediting teams were balanced and fairly representative of women and minorities, implying inferences of underrepresentation. One respondent observed: "Greater effort is needed to assure that accreditation

visitation teams reflect concerns in the composition of the student body whether the College's staff does or not." Another respondent declared, "Serving on an evaluation team may be the best in-service training available!"

When the institutional responses covering specialized/professional accrediting activities are examined, there is amazing consistency and similarity in all of the areas covered. The only exception was the fact that the respondents for specialized accreditation more often included department/division chair as the one responsible for recommending potential evaluators/consultants. They were less certain about the ethnicity of their own self-study groups and that of the accrediting teams, however. This group was unanimous in judging participation in the accrediting process as prestigious and enhancing professional upward mobility although several commented such mobility is not an aspiration of most faculty members.

The Participants

The survey instrument was designed to gather information on the perceived criteria and source of qualification and selection for participation from those who actually had served. In addition, information on perceived empowerment from such participation was sought. This group was asked to identify perceived institutional and accrediting agency level barriers to the identification, selection, and utilization of women and minorities in the accrediting process. In addition, recommendations were solicited for those who aspire to become involved as well as for action at the institutional and accrediting agency level.

The participant profile reflected in responses to this survey was startling. Ninety percent of the respondents were female Caucasians. Among the few males responding, half were Black and half were Hispanic. The evidence was clear; very few minorities are identified at the institutional level. Of the women and minorities reporting, twenty-five percent had served as a chairperson. As far as their professional position within their institution is concerned, 85 percent occupy administrative positions at the Associate Dean through the Department Chair level. Only fifteen percent were at the Dean through President levels. The small percentage in the upper administrative eschelons is consistent with the profile of women and minorities in higher education administration as reported by Astin (1982), Moore (1984), and Frances and Mensel (1981).

When asked the source of initial nomination to serve for an accrediting agency, an internal source was reported in 80 percent of the cases. The nominator usually was the president or executive vice president and occasionally a dean or department chair. Approximately ten percent of the respondents indicated an external source of identification and nomination, usually visiting team chairs and/or agency staff ... usually as a result of exemplary work on the self-study. About ten percent of the respondents did not know the source of their original identification for this service.

Respondents were asked to prioritize a list of possible factors which could have been the basis of their selection and nomination ranging from work activities to personal relationships

and personal characteristics. Based on a weighted scale, participants serving institutional accrediting agencies identified highest to lowest: position, area of expertise, activities in institution, a mentor/sponsor, gender, professional alliances, activities in professional organizations, race, and activities in community or state groups. The respondents who serve specialized/professional accrediting agencies gave somewhat different rankings: area of expertise, position, activities in professional organization, professional alliances, activities in the institution, and mentor/sponsor. Interestingly, none of these respondents indicated race or activities in community or state groups as a factor.

Another item on the survey instrument asked those who had identified a mentor/sponsor as contributing to their selection to check a series of characteristics which would describe that individual. The overwhelming characteristic pattern produced a profile of Caucasian, male, administrator, superior. This finding, of course, is consistent with the literature on mentors/sponsors (Kram, 1980, 1983, 1985; Moore, 1984).

Participants were also asked to prioritize those factors which seemed to have contributed to actual selection by the accrediting agency. The important factors in rank order identified by the respondents who serve institutional accrediting agencies were: area of expertise, your position/title, reputation, character of the institution visited, activities in the profession, and make-up of the visiting team. There were only slight differences perceived between this participant group and those who serve specialized/professional agencies. The

latter group agreed area of expertise and position were the two most important but identified character of institution visited as the third most important and activities in the profession as the fourth most important factor. Reputation and the make-up of the visiting team followed as perceived selection criteria.

The nature and scope of empowerment associated with the accrediting process as perceived by those who actually participate was also examined. Two aspects of empowerment, external and internal, were reported. Respondents indicated observed or experienced evidence of empowerment as a result of their accrediting process participation among administrators and faculty peers within their institution and within their own profession. Ninety percent of the respondents indicated perceived empowerment among administrators in their institution and an equal percentage identified empowerment from the internal perspective of self-awareness or self-esteem.

Respondents were then asked to indicate actual evidence of empowerment among the institutional peers and administrators. Over one-half reported they had experienced their recommendations were sought and/or translated into action and they experienced greater cooperation from superiors as a result of their accrediting process participation. A third of the respondents indicated they had experienced expansion of job responsibilities or authority as a result of such empowerment.

We were also interested in knowing what personal empowering outcomes were credited to participation in the accrediting process. Fifty percent of the respondents indicated they gained

an increased sense of self-confidence and established connections in professional networks as a result of their experience. Almost as large a number indicated they had been stimulated to professional development activities as a result of their participation and almost one-third of the respondents indicated they had experienced increased professional aspirations as a result of their involvement. An analysis of the responses from the participants in specialized/professional accrediting were consistent in every category with those who participated in institutional accreditation. They had experienced or observed empowerment among their administrators and peers in their own institution as well as within their profession in addition to self-awareness and esteem. They had found recommendations sought and followed, greater cooperation among administrators and faculty as well as formal advancement as a result of participation. Finally, they experienced similar patterns of personal empowering from self confidence and connections to stimulation of professional development and increased work engagements.

## Summary

This national study was concerned with involvement of women and minorities in the accrediting process. The conceptual framework was based on the theory of empowerment since accreditation in American higher education is unique and prestigious and since participation in the accrediting process results from identification and selection policies and procedures.

The study examined aspects of participation of women and

minorities from the perspective of the accrediting agencies, the member institutions, and those who have been active participants in the process. Three phases were carried out in the study. All COPA member accrediting agencies were asked to supply the names of institutions which had carried out self-study any time during the last three years. Then, survey instruments were sent to the accrediting agencies and a sample of the institutions they had identified, and, finally, women and minorities who had been identified by the institutions were surveyed to determine their experiences in the accrediting process as well as perceived or actual empowerment derived from such participation.

The respondent behavior and pattern of comments suggest the subject of the study stimulated strong defensive reactions, whether of a political or ethical nature. There was consistent strong agreement that participation in the accrediting process is perceived as empowering. Yet, accrediting agencies do not have policies or practices which would utilize such empowerment as a strategy for addressing the underrepresentation of women and minorities in higher education. While the accrediting staffs clearly attempt to identify and select qualified minorities and women in a non-discriminatory manner, the fact remains that many within the institutions are unfamiliar with the identification and selection process. The mystique of accreditation is perpetuated by the absence of widespread knowledge of the process, particularly within the member institutions at the lower administrative and faculty levels. Furthermore, the composition of visiting teams which take into consideration balance as well

as the nature of the institution being visited are, in reality, more compliance motivated than anything else. While assurance of minorities on teams or committees visiting where populations of minorities are enrolled is logical, it might be argued that greater egalitarian purposes would be served by minority presence on accrediting visits to institutions or programs where minorities are underrepresented among the student population.

The constituent institutions do, with few exceptions, involve women and minorities in the self-study accreditation process. It appears to stop there, however, since little is known about how individuals were identified or selected for participation in the accrediting process at the agency level as reflected in the responses of both the institutions and the active women and minority participants. It has been said that accreditation is high in the conscious level only when an institution's cycle is up; it would appear that similar identification with accredititation in nominating women and minority members from the administration and faculty only occurs on a limited scale.

The potential of the empowerment in the accrediting process is recognized in many institutional policies, however. According to this study, individuals empowered from participating in the accrediting process can expect to benefit from consideration for professional growth, tenure and promotion, even in enhanced working relationships with administrators and faculty. Such a conclusion is as true of the specialized/professional accreditation as it is of the institutional accreditation experience.

Just as agencies have not considered or utilized the empowerment potential of participation, institutions similarly seem unaware, if not disinterested, in the potential of identifying and nominating qualified women and minorities to become active participants in the accrediting process. While it is generally agreed professional growth as well as opportunities to examine practices in other settings result from participation, little has been done at the institutional level to capitalize on this potential of accrediting.

Finally, those who have enjoyed the empowerment benefit of participating in the accrediting process acknowledge a dual responsibility for maximizing such involvement of all qualified faculty and staff. Individuals need to take a proactive stance, learn more about accreditation and its procedures, how to be identified and selected, and then document achievements and other relevant qualifications in order to warrant nomination and participation. However, accreditation and institutional leaders need to examine their responsibility to capitalize upon the unique opportunities inherent in the accrediting process to correct the underrepresentation of minorities and women in American higher education.

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